Later three kids come along and are amused by the coughing box. After they have finished with it they throw in some gasoline and a lighted match.

Agony propels her, burning, upright among the burning ruin of the box. And in the last seconds before her eyeballs burn out, she sees, unseeing, the heavy enclave portals, sealed against the outside. And above them the numerals 47. Nothing more.

SF POETRY:
A New Genre

ANDREW JORON

Andrew Joron is a three-time winner of the Rhysling Award, given annually by the Science Fiction Poetry Association. His essays and poems have appeared in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, Amazing Stories, New Worlds, Foundation, *and other publications. He also edits* Velocities: A Magazine of Speculative Poetry *and the Velocities Chapbook Series.* Force Fields *is a recent collection of his poetry. The following insightful essay puts forward a penetrating view of an important new area of SF's development.*

Science fiction is branching out into many different forms of art, besides the written story: It is branching into music, into film, into drama and opera, and it is just beginning to branch out into poetry.

Poetry is in some ways the most dangerous territory

for SF to colonize—it is very difficult to join the two forms and not have one of them cancel the other one out. One operates by means of a fictional plot, and the other, by means of a musical language and imagery. One cannot be simply reduced to the other.

The needs of the story are informational and expository: A story is a way of communicating a set of facts, real or imaginary. The needs of the modern poem are less easily defined. To quote from Wittgenstein: "Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information." The poem is trying to give us something else, something that prose can't give us: This is what has been called the tragic quest of modern poetry, its seeking to express the inexpressible.

There are other difficulties facing the marriage of SF and poetry, and these stem from social rather than formal causes. The trouble is, most readers in SF have a stereotyped notion of poetry as something that rhymes, that has regular meter, of it being limited to a certain range of subjects that usually doesn't include science and technology. None of these things are true of modern poetry. What is true is that modern poetry is frequently written in a nonnarrative, nonrational mode, a kind of writing with which readers in SF have had little or no experience. Because of this, I suspect that many SF readers have a prejudice against any kind of writing that doesn't tell a story, including most of modern poetry.

Most of fan poetry, I may as well mention as an aside, is written in a sort of debased reflection of the style of the 18th century: iambic pentameter, a painful obsession with rhymes, with all the standard SF story-

lines and situations present, only redressed in old verse drag. Very little of the SF poetry written to date has taken advantage of the later verse forms, specifically those designed to deal with problems of poetic language in an age of science and technology. And yet I believe these later forms—symbolism, surrealism, imagism, and so on—are much more appropriate to SF than the antique verse forms that everybody still identifies with poetry (perhaps because our school systems never teach these rebellious, although quite sophisticated, forms, and instead are intent on forcing Longfellow and Alexander Pope on high school students who would rather be reading Philip K. Dick).

So, to answer the questions Why doesn't poetry rhyme anymore? and Why does it so often not seem to make any sense? we would have to look back at the concrete historical forces, things like technology and economic structure, that help to condition the way people think and write about the world they live in. Rhyme and regular rhythm come from an age of medieval court poetry, when they mainly served as memory-aids to oral recitation, and when the primary intent of poetry was to chronicle the deeds of a great and mighty aristocracy. A regularized meter reflects the stabilized hierarchy of feudal society, where the pattern of life was unchanging, year after year, and where every person, like every word and every syllable, had a proper place in the scheme of things; whereas modern free verse reflects more of the questioning and chaotic individualism that prevails under capitalism, as well as the typographical innovations made possible by the printing press.

We see that in every period of history, writers evolve

forms and techniques that are directed to the problems and needs of life in the times they are living in; and that life in a society dominated by science and technology cannot be very well expressed by verse forms developed several centuries earlier, before the Industrial Revolution. So, if we're talking about science fiction poetry, we're talking about a modernist form of poetry, a kind of writing that experiments with the very substance of language itself—its sound and syntax—in much the same way that science fiction prose experiments or speculates by using the methods of plot and character.

Which brings us to the second obstacle I mentioned: the reason why the techniques of modern poetry are better suited for evoking moods, or depicting a state of mind, than for telling stories. This has to do, very generally, with a shift away from the epic, and toward the lyric form in modern poetry—away from mythopoeic sagas of the great and mighty and toward certain rare and singular moments inside the mind of an individual person. This shift from the epic to the lyric has its roots in the changing social position of poets. The system of aristocratic patronage was crumbling, and literature had found a new audience—the rising merchant classes—who were less interested in high-class refinements of language, used to describe the power struggles of the gods, than in hearing stories about themselves and the way they—in the middle class—lived.

The novel was born about this time, and literature began to be sustained through the market system, which meant that poetry—refined speech—began to be marginalized in favor of prose, which was ordinary speech being

used for the first time for literary purposes. Prose became the most widely understood and widely accepted way of telling stories, while poetry, pushed back to the margins of society, became something else. It began to concentrate on everything that prose ignored, going after facets of experience, thoughts and feelings that could not be captured by an expository way of writing. It began to try expressing all the things that could not possibly be expressed by prose.

Poets were beginning to see language as an unexplored territory that prose writers merely took for granted. Where the prose writers were content with inventing new plots and new characters using ordinary speech, the poets were beginning to renew and extend that speech in different ways, to reinvent the way that things could be said, so as to voyage into uncharted areas of experience.

We are very close here to the aims of science fiction, and it's no surprise that SF and modern poetry begin to share from this point on certain important historic junctions—it's even possible they were born together, as twins; for example, in the circle around the Shelleys, when Percy was writing *Prometheus Unbound,* and Mary was writing *Frankenstein.*

Another crucial literary figure for both SF and poetry is Edgar Allan Poe, and we find him iterating the same distinction between the romance novel, which was narrative, and the new poetry, which was not. He wrote, in 1831, that the poem was different from the romance: ". . . by having for its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object

is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *indefinite* sensations, to which end music is *essential,* since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music," Poe continues, "when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness."

The distinction Poe makes between definite and indefinite perceptions is a distinction between writing that proceeds by logical, step-by-step exposition, and writing that depends for its effect on meaning by unconscious association, allusiveness, and implication. It is the difference between a prosaic plot and a poetic image.

The French poet Baudelaire picked up this idea from Poe, and thereby initiated the entire symbolist movement. Poe's emphasis on "music" is his way of saying that the physical, material aspect of language—the sound and syntax it is made of—must become an essential component of the poet's art, just as important as the meaning of what is being said.

The raw material that poets work with is language, in the same way that painters work with shapes and colors and sculptors work with stone. Unlike the fiction writer, the poet is not concerned with referring us away from language itself to a set of imaginary characters and events; what is being created in the modern poem, in embryo, is the possibility for a whole new language—actually, music is being made out of the very stuff, the three elements of sound, syntax, and meaning—that people ordinarily use for mundane purposes, like communication.

I would like to illustrate this point with a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, written around 1885, in which

musical experiments with sound and syntax are used quite vividly, to complement and reinforce the meaning:

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty,
voluminous, . . . stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, womb-of-all,
home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.
Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, her wild
hollow hoarlight hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earl-stars, stars principal,
overbend us,
Fire-featuring heaven. For earth her being has
unbound, her dapple is at an end, as-
tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; self in self
steeped and pashed—quite
Disremembering, dismembering all now. Heart, you
round me right
With: our evening is over us; our night whelms,
whelms, and will end us.

Hopkins was one of the most important, if neglected, British poets of the 19th century. The highly original use of sound and grammatical ordering, or syntax, amounts to a speculative reworking of the substance of language that almost passes over into science fiction poetry.

We need to be more attuned to the fact that a poem, if it is going to be speculative, or if it is going to be science-fictional, is going to do this according to the three variables of poetic art—the sound of words, the layers of meaning associated with them, and the syntax

that hooks them all together—and not according to the variables of fictional art, which have more to do with plot structure, character motivation, and so on. If there is a tradition of science-fiction poetry, it is because there are poems that approach *language* in a science-fictional way, and not poems that have merely adopted the style and content of SF prose according to some antiquated notion of rhymed poetry. SF poetry should be regarded as a separate genre within the form of poetry, and not as a subgenre dependent on a fictional mode of writing.

In conclusion, I'd like to present now part of a poem by another British poet, Peter Redgrove, a contemporary of ours, writing almost a hundred years after Hopkins, and producing what I consider to be some of the most interesting science fiction poetry being written today.

The cars live us now. What is the meme,
The gamete of the machine, how did its great code
Of metallic genes enter us and guide us
To stamp it out of the earth-marrow? Did some
  smoke of metal
Penetrate the nostrils of the engineer immaculately,
In his pregnant invention swell to a steel foetus?
Our appetite is dressing in earth-machines
Mineral suits like wombs of mother earth in which we
Hang suspended in our straps at even temperatures,
While the cars, great-eyed, glide on their ways.
We are bottled persons. Car-needs
Created computers; we are no more than
  mothers'-arms
Teaching the metal to take its first wheeled steps.

The computer soon will be able to move
The necessary motes through the roadlike circuitry
Within the metal hull of the planet
Travelling by radar on its spacious orbit,
Turned entire into car-forms like a stinking garden
Thick with metal flowers and their radio roots
Deep in soil that is circuitry,
That hums with its motion grazing on space-textures,
Like some Rolls-Royce steeped in its own excellence
That has dispensed with his Lordship, her Ladyship,
And, the sun and the moon shining in its coachwork,
Spins through brilliant space with only its clock
  ticking.

The imagery of science and technology are clearly prevalent in this poem, but they are present not in a realistic way that merely reflects what *is*, but in an imaginative and very speculative way. The theme of the poem is a common one: that technology is taking over not only human lives but the entire natural universe as well. Yet in the case of this poem, the theme cannot be reduced to a fictional narrative, though of course many SF stories have shared a similar theme.

This is no coincidence. There are few literary genres besides poetry and SF that are able to even partially represent the enormous impact science and technology have had on human life and consciousness. Whether this convergence on the level of subject matter, or content, can be reconciled on the level of form is the greatest dilemma facing SF poetry today. There is good reason for

SF and poetry to join forces right now, *if* this can be accomplished without harm to the goals and ideals of either one.

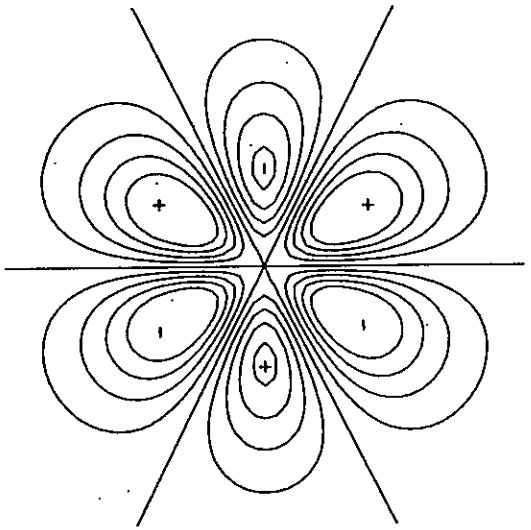
The American poet Hart Crane once suggested an analogy between chemistry and writing. All writing that lacks the poetic is as distant from reality as the formula used to describe a chemical reaction; whereas poetic writing is the chemical reaction itself. By this analogy, SF poetry would be a reaction akin to superfluid helium 3, a substance recently discovered that, at close to absolute zero, obeys none of the classical laws governing liquids in motion—in much the same way that a real SF poetry would obey none of the standard laws of story-telling prose.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

George Zebrowski is a science fiction novelist, short-story writer, and editor whose work has appeared in a half-dozen languages. He is best known for his novels *Macrolife* and *The Omega Point Trilogy.* His most recent novel is *The Stars Will Speak.* His most recent short stories have appeared in *Analog, Amazing Stories, Universe 16, The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Aboriginal SF, Popular Computing, Twilight Zone,* and *The Bertrand Russell Quarterly.* He is a past Nebula Award nominee. At present he is completing two trilogies and a new novel set in the *Macrolife* mosaic. *The Monadic Universe* collects fourteen of his more than fifty short stories. Among the many books he has edited are the three most recent Nebula Award anthologies. He lives and writes in upstate New York.

FORCE FIELDS

Andrew Joron



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AN DIE ELTERN: LEO & ANNI

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BREAKING INTO THE CRYSTAL TEXT

Each step echoes
        in the interstices of this knowledge
        a passage lost
Miles underground
—entering the great hall
We see each page: a silvery lattice
Revolving in the dust

. . . a sudden flux of chronons
Signals *the Reading has begun*
Our monads of sense
        become tiny crustaceans
Flickering toward the unbounded machine

Each moment is sealed
& cross-referenced
        to the next creation

Each word has its own history
        spherical
Its center suffused with silence

Each sentence
        may be a volcanic island
Risen out of the bed of deep-sea darkness
Cooling as it remains
        bare of vegetation
        mirrored in its own lagoon

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

I

The construction of language—the first machine—was completed about a million years ago. Other tools in that initial period of hominization were merely the extensions of our hands, but the system of *words* sealed us fatefully within an ur-industrial order of interlocking parts (syntax) whose surfaces may have appeared to "make sense," but whose mechanism corresponded to no human model. Meaning is the extension of the hands of something *other*: something unimagined.

II

Tools & language both are a means of giving access to the Inhuman. Yet the universal drifting-apart is symmetrically reversed by an implosion of energies in the symbol/artifact. Because the symbolic system (like the solar system) is not the result of conscious design, we are forced in our inmost selves to obey an equally Inhuman law. It seems we are locked within language as irrevocably as within the metric of space-time; these are the absolute conditions of our existence. The discontinuity noted by Saussure between a sign and its all-too-human referent offers a clue that our minds no less than our bodies must be composed of dead stars: this is the dark inflection behind every utterance, the light-barrier beyond which nothing can ever be communicated.

SHIPWRECKED ON DESTINY FIVE

Final communique: long wanderings
near the edge
Of the so-called "fractured" terrain
Where night is always falling

The largest of three suns
is tidally distorted
perpetually
Smeared above the south horizon
while the smallest
When eclipsed, burns a hole
Right through that giant's helium husk

None of us has spoken
much this morning
Since we sighted the Carven Cliffs
spectro-
Analyzed from orbit: walls of unnatural smoothness
reflective as water
But splashed at intervals
By a dark symbology

We buried Johnson there
Another case of petrifaction
—why
Should they all freeze
In that characteristic attitude
lacking instruments
It's sometimes difficult to tell
Death from life
there are nine of us left

Other phenomena, so far
Unreported: surely no miracles
Only a few
Sensory tricks—auguries in clear weather

the floating columns
Of indeterminate size
& substance—still pacing us in our travels
Like spirit-stanchions, an all-surveying
Ennead
the guardians
Of an abandoned world?—or the roving
Geometric shadows of our minds

An ocean clotted with pink algae
—their floral
Cycles of tiny outgassing
Fill the air
With the clamor of a million violins

weedy tissues
Woven into rocks—that seem to pulsate
Altering their hue
With the pattern of our voices

Mists of metallic particles
gathering in shapes
That tease & respond to the artistry of our despair

The whistling body of the atmosphere
Lowers upon us like a mountain
The very pores of skyflesh
appearing
In skeins & sinews of the airflow
Opening like graves of light around our heads

The chromium bones
of our landing craft become
A lost language of shiny objects
—the sacred gears
Of a god machine

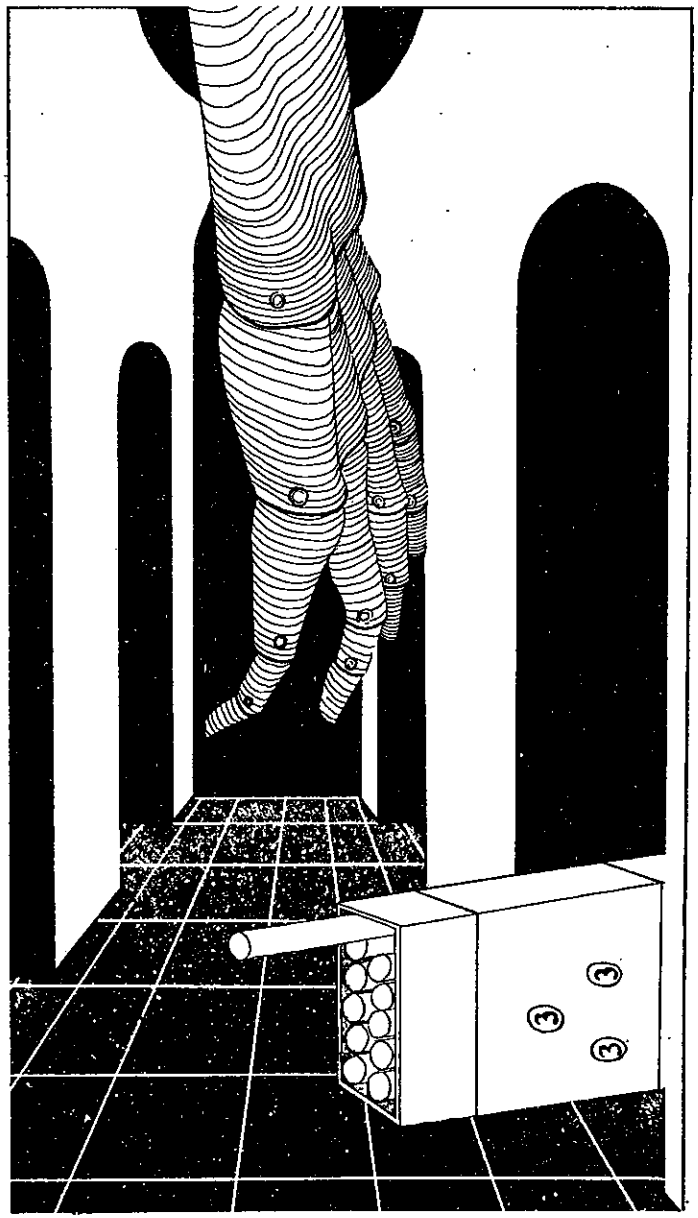
& we must tread among these
warped totems
A crew of empty spacesuits
Mantled in corrosive
& caressing spume
Remote-controlled
By a host of artificial memories
motiveless, we must continue
Searching
For some piece of fallen science

ground down
To our knees by the heavy gravity
Until we assume
our final
& somehow mystical
Postures
forming a tradition
Of abstract sculpture
Scattered along a scarlet beach

AGENCY

Heat-sensitive
In semi-darkness
& lacking nothing of the living
Meat's precision
Her prosthetic hand reaches for a cigarette
Whining softly, tiny motors
Press & release: tip to tip
On each glass fingernail glows a readout
Its motion in series—a miniature chase scene

A design for future assassinations



A BEAUTIFUL DISEASE

After he lay in a soft room/diffuse with ices
That was called the Cube of Day

& looked at clouds that passed
His window—an upside-down
Accelerated landscape
. . . a mirror for the collapse
Of mountains

In Kepler's head
The outer planets played
Disquieting harmonies of the dead

Other, video-engendered
Friends would whisper to him, read & decay
In spiral-calculations

But half a man is tired of these voices
That drip lost numbers
Beneath a drone of fishpipes; or leak
An ocean's Moon-drawn
Phrase—dense as vital juices run
From severed objects around his bedside

nature morte
One votive jar of poison bees
A steel etching
Nerve-portrait of his future body

Stained instruments, that force
Food & water upward
To the surface of this amniotic sphere

triomphe du rêve
Out of the wall there grow
Long sensitive tongues
Administering to his childhood—pale
Servants, forever silenced—gray newsreels
Of a parallel past, that show invading armies

& pinned to the door
A viral snowflake

The mind snared
in its diamond saliva
As nurses trace, with
Well-trained fingers
Cold & faintly shining . . . open valves

A street of roofless
Empty houses
Where he saw the Contaminated
Ships set sail
& women, undressed of their flesh
Fly away
In the dreams of wild animals

THE WEBBED AXIS

I
This turning torso is a model of the world

Televised to us, flat
& electro-perfumed

It is a neuron pierced by tiny swords
—a living tapestry
Treated with fluorescent humours

Red
Into *indigo-violet*
At the end of the saga
A negative Sun goes down unseen

& her form appears—in hollow silhouette
Wearing a gown of parasites
The inset shows, many times magnified
How a saboteur has ripped apart
The coarsely-coded fibers

Elsewhere, balloon-shaped vessels
List unanchored in the sunken sky
Like nascent organs of perception

Hurt & pneumatical
Our eyes receive
The iron beams of an Infinite Host

II
We found these aged hands, storm-strewn, caught
In the trees & covered with static

It is rumored no one controls the seasons
In this sector

In its time, the bulb will burst, nonetheless
& the spores relay our messages
To the missing castle

The strategic tables in the air
May some day return
Freighted with their frost-white cattle
—their surgical spoons
Eradicated suddenly
As a solemn jest, like the beards of ghosts
Twined between two occult suppers

An impossible chord
Strummed high above a whirlpool in space
Is also a helical lament
Spawned in the broken cells of our breath

At last the groaning rotunda that appears in our sleep
Desires to turn
Slow as a hurricane dance
Gravid with old light

Its pendulum
Once pulsant with all the Saints' pornographies
To waste away . . . a tuneless rose
Is hung there in an attitude of rust

III
This tattered confessional
Membrane told of a place
where *red eggs multiply at her command*
—focusing her diamond implement
She studies the "urban buds" along my tongue

Photo-activated
On this faded page
—cold & Edenic, nod the pictures
Of calm strange beasts

These chirping & perpetual toys
Staccato-laugh
Key phrases
From an old mechanical book

Our lanterns will construct a cavern here
Honeycombed with eidolons
Wide-eyed webs
Hung in cursives, similar to the Eastern *litterae*

& count the brass urns
Distilling motion out of stones

IV
Another eye of power
Opening here—deep in the palladium dusk

. . . a frieze of lost angelic engines
Saturn's navies held in a jewelled array

Our gestures run away from us
As we revise her form
—the unfinished head alone
Respires a true magnetic aura
More intricate than life

What ruinous fluid
Is this same scene
Raining endless on our retinas
Wreathed with auroras—a single flower of needles

When she is smitten with the cries of twilight simulacra
& we are timelines twisted
Into as many pictures of departure

Every glance arrives
With desperate rapidity—like a zoom lens
Pulling azimuth down to eye-level
Converging on the pallid globe of Earth

Smoky visages who mouth the Original Name

EVENT HORIZON

As life is alien to the Earth, so language is alien to life. Between them, there can be no resemblance: each one is the mortal remains of the other. It is a work of dissolution to ascend from the order of the Rock to that of the Eye to the Idea. At one level are the motiveless atoms, the worlds their sediment, light itself in constant darkening (aftereffect of the spontaneous collapse of a singularity). At a higher level, communication also is a process of decay: the breaking-apart of an incommunicable Unity. Life—in relation to the vastness of the energy flux in language—is wasteland, preserving a stasis in all its teeming that is equal to the silence of the prebiotic Earth. Every event is the opening of a new abyss.*

*These are the decipherments of runes found on the shielding of various "Relativistic Sepulchers" that lately have begun to materialize on the fused plain at Izmir.

MIRROR OF PROMETHEUS

The vial is shattered, his head
Encircled
By the birds of disaster

A stain like diseased light
    follows his every movement
A solar seepage
In human shape—the relic
Of his brain
Installed
As a radio inside a broken statue

He listens
On the forbidden channel: a New Order
Is pronounced

Time-shards contain him
Secretly
In their just proportion

In gems, disposed at random
Over bare earth

All their compass
Would be a chorus measure
Of the degrees his spine can bend

The iron prongs of his ribs
Creak open like antique gates

    organ of life
    grinding on
In grand sustain under a starless dome

The gravities
Of unseen presences distort the past
        a dull & steady rhythm
In his ear / are prayers to immense machinery
Underground

& his skin is made
To flow away—another landscape of flower-animals
Whose helio-plasms
Show an architecture
        similar to Plato's *Laws*
Dawn-whitened porticos
Redolent with nepenthe & musk
The judgment of the gods
Again is issued: a floating rhomboid
The knife rises
The skies boding information silence

Rituals of the world's end become
Randomized as Paradise
In a window in the air
(eternal friend of fire)—he watches
The obsolete biomasses
Of Europe, Africa & Asia
        returning home
—gently spin in freefall

The mineral Idea
Evolves toward senescence; & he waits
        the light scraping at his eye

His screams are phonemes
In a language about to be invented

VEHICULAR MAN

Over the horizon, huge as a cloud
        with lazily revolving fins
Climbs the airship—its fuselage
Warped into a shape like a man-leviathan
        a shape like that most famous of explosions
        filmed at half-speed
& spewing a meal: half-digested birds
        multifarious
Germ-spores of the upper reaches
O millennial boat
Who bears our injuries: undersides
Raked by church spires—TV towers
        behold
The grazer on the foods of lower Paradise!

Winged policewomen
Singing palinodes of shame
Attend the opening of that dark maw
        its belly turning inner
        geographies to the ground

Raw ballast
Sagging, full of inertia—but pleasing
        in the magnitude of its decay
As a planet
Before it falls into the Sun

TETRAHEDRON LETTERS

I
Mutant trees with leaves of luminescent eyes
Were watching our last meeting
Beyond that abyssal arch-way
In river mist
& siren sounds; our rendezvous
The zodiac instructed
A ruined, round
Entrance to the tunnel city
Saying nothing—was frozen code
I walked with you
Away from that verdigris'd great mouth
Having bravely posed as pilgrims, red-hooded
Heads bent low; an issuance like the sick breath
Of some underground beast: we ghosted on
'Til all the light was gone

I took you to the robot shipyards
& past their Controllers' high-rise homes

True unbelievers, blindly we made our way
Along the unpatrolled west bank
Where deathsigns were posted long ago
A shallow bourne
Once radiation-bathed, our goddess
Of the dying Industries did bless

Into a sterilized & rust-stained zone
A fused orchard of whistling pipe-ends
Nearby the deeper wells
We startled a flock of flame-beaked repair birds

Their cries were like static
Across the deserted concrete of the loading docks
Other artifacts
Might have been following.
But, hand in hand, we ran & none pursued us
Down to the Moon-destroyed
Goddess-melted gantries, there at Portside

II
The enemy satellite was nearing zenith
Onboard, a team of psychic terrorists
Was readying its series
Of dire hallucinogenic signals
To be relayed through the body
Of an ivory-throated virgin

Our wired child, the transmitter Eon
Was sleeping safely in you

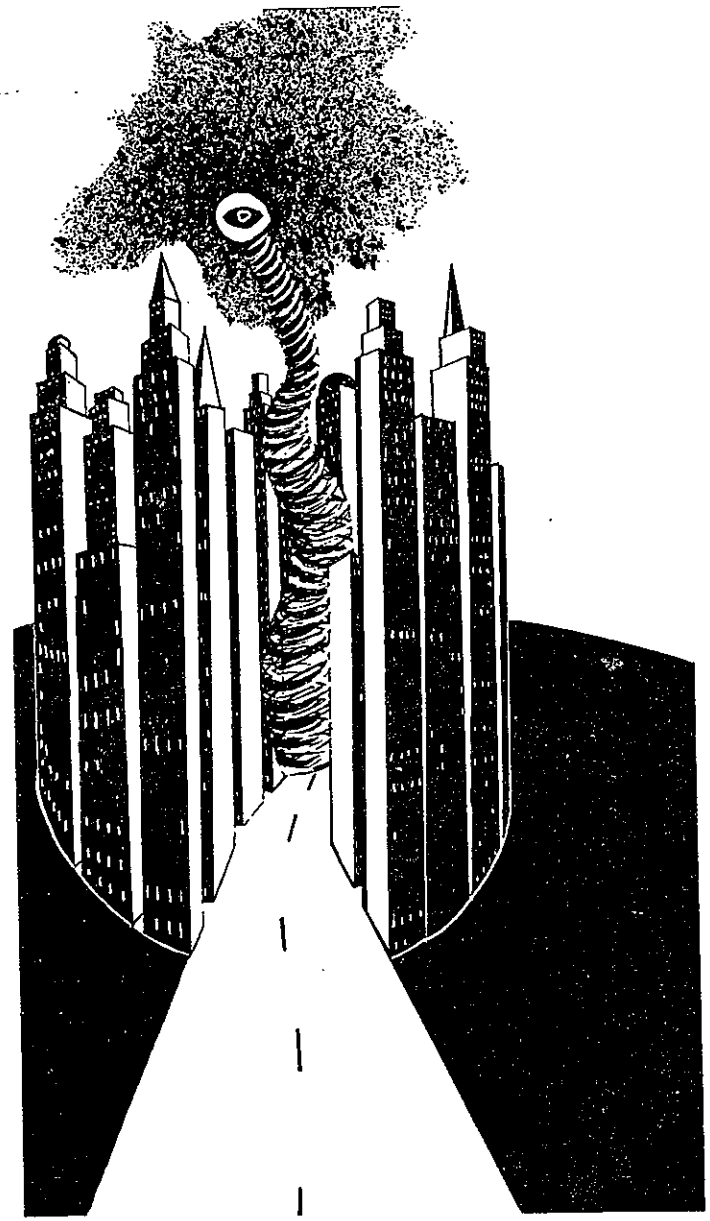
& we left a channel open
So they could hear/ our hieratic trade
A pauseless whispering of living clocks
Fine-veined registers . . . of the closed universe
In which we shared our long last kiss

III
Carrying the cube of your dust
I travelled alone
Into the automated forest
I was wandering for dark days
Among a petrified machinery
When I found their hollow mountains, echoing
With past wars/ a chamber
Floored in the ancient flesh of mathematic witches
Warm labyrinths, & lab-like tombs
Filled with the flasks of their embryonic brains

On the sixth night of my exile
I triangulated some sad distance
& far away, I saw again
That face/ once familiar
In the purity of its suffering
Radio icon: was it you become
Transfigured there
By a golden periodicity
Their second goddess, yes
Created anew: & singing to me
In the crescent of the young Moon

THE HUNTER: A.D. 20,000

His is the body laid to rest in grave-site West
Whose whitening bones are built of disassembled suns
A deformed hunter—great Orion, that fearful strider
Into stony seas at dawn
    headless
    armless
He follows an almost human fate
Through winter-eras of silence, passing decrepit
Now, a Beggar-god above their vacant cities
A seeker of only new vacua
In these skies of falling engineering
He is going with them to a joyless end
The leprous fires
Of his starry silhouette are as the last
Of human signs departing, in slow
Dispersal into space
    & nameless populations
That knew his shape too are like particles of ice
Borne away on the bitter wind



POST-HISTORIC PASTORALE

I
The town of Mandala is watched over
By machine intelligence
—perhaps a satellite
Dimly descended to the Earth
Artifact from the type of tyrants
        it hangs there
        supplanter of the Sun
Its searchlights play across the crowd below
        a pulsing eyeball
—a mind weapon freed from orbit

& calls to mechanick brothers
Each poised above the other villages
        on this desert
        rerunning rituals
It sings the song of SURVEILLANCE
Our breaths
Suspended in its radiance

For we are its perfected folk: made uniform
& genderless
—speaking only
In the language of our robot rulers
A series of darkly measured whispers
        we are as clouds
Converging on some abstract truth

II
At the end of every avenue
In the circular city
There stares a monumental Eye of Power
        empinnacled
        on a whirlwind

Inaudibly it roars . . . subliminal commands
& blessings hourly

Under the eye: grain molders in silos
The weather is changed into an ideogram
        that is not for us
        to understand

III
We march: our limbs are turning
        ceremonious wheels

        though we move
Uncertainly, in long procession
        toward
That numinecent gaze
A steely mirror no larger than the Moon
        wherein our souls are melted
Multi-distanced
        & marked with stigmata
Forever lost in that blue alembic

Our bodies the living counters
Crushed on a concrete surface
        finely
        delineated as a gameboard

We stop & go
        according
        to a calculus of mental pressures
Harmony is pre-established

Under the eye: we advance
        a humming presages the final voice
The children are resealed in silken cusps
—unchosen ones are left to gambol
        in the drainage area
All futurity wears the head of an insect

        (the voice begins
To address the god)

ASLEEP IN THE ARMS OF MOTHER NIGHT

One millennium more
An old woman walking in the snow
Follows the light at the center of the Earth
Should she find it, we shall wake
We travellers in sleep; Earth's children
Each walking alone in our own forest of stars

With a Moon like the soul of winter ascending
To the home of all last things
Here is nothing that is complete
These white nights are still as all the forests forgotten
All lost in her head, as her children are lost
In the forests, far in the star-fields
Where oldening clouds, & sacral hours
Later, on thought's long journey to its earthly center
She steps down into the ancient stone cists

And here, like a hundred Decembers
Of this old world's last century
In silent apocalypse
Does the snow on our tools' tombs descend

A silence whose center is nowhere—whose softest
Circumference seems infinite as our failing
To say what we know in this stillness is true
Of Time, wearing the faces of all other children
Of a light held in the dark Earth's hand

To the cislunar spaces our words are spoken
Signals transmitted in the tides & sky
Slow as geologic ages
Our dreams entropic noise & heat
Our lives are the data
Trapped in a wave-train of necessity & nothingness

The messages of that mother
Who is the soul of Earth, & mortal

Who delivers at dawning to the dark man's hand
All things in her old cloud sack; a whole world's sleeping
Phosphorescent infants bundled in black
And all things tooled finely, all things learned
Ask something of forever
But tonight she is their answerer in body: Time's whore
Dancing endlessly his rounds
Her children shall some day become him

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

Existence has no meaning except as human practice: the self-production of consciousness that was always implicit in the blind productions of matter. But the opening provided by the random flux for purpose creates a reaction against the initial condition of unmeaning: matter, once organized as mind, can & must proceed to alter the conditions of its own existence (this is what Marx intended by his phrase "the naturalization of the human & the humanization of nature"). Consciousness, however, is no less ephemeral than any other form of organized matter; its weak statistical possibility is swamped finally by the overwhelming tendency of energy States to move toward equilibrium. The entire biosphere would be united in struggle against this form of motion, yet evolution (until the appearance of consciousness) was "allowed" no other possibility than to operate as mechanistically as its enemy, under the old regime of energy capture & dissipation. Here emerges the *Pudels Kern* of a scientific theodicy: even the plants, absolved of the carnivorous compulsion to kill, must forfeit their innocence by competing for ecological niches. The self-realization that is the aim of consciousness remains incomplete until all of nature is transformed, relieved of the inimical tendency toward self-devoration inherited from the simplest motion of non-living matter. No more to exist as the mere reflection of the original lightning-flash of *ylem*! Everything must be viewed & criticized from the standpoint of this redemptive moment, this task of saving the dead.

TWO WALKERS ACROSS THE TIME FLATS

I
How the trees
Stand here, like statements of loss
In some forgotten tongue

Lake also is a word that escapes us
—eyeless organisms
Move in its depths
Feeding on the rain of flesh

II
When the sky fills up
We will notice, at all hours
A scarcity of light

& understand *distance*
As a plain populated by pillars of bone

HEGEMONY

By day, turbaned riders
Hunt down the miniaturized cities
        which scuttle away
Crab-like, into crevices of fused sand

Yesterday a second Constantinople
        was destroyed
Along with a domed metropolis of Mars
        whose name
        went unrecorded

Soon, the living models of Nineveh
& New York will be found out
        seized with pincers
        & tied with ropes
        watched, as they
Writhe, writhe snake-like—their scales
Of a million iridescent windows
Finally darkening
In the snare

By night the Royal families
        billow through halls
Built of used-up temporal substance
Several centuries high

Occasionally
Laughing women
        ugly as glass muses
Throw raging "stars" of binary language
Across the courtyard
        as symbolled shadows fall
        on all that's left
Of the human landscape underfoot

KALEIDOSCOPE OF DUST

The eyes of a mad bird
Control this scene
    sunset: architrave
    quietness: a null choir
In a sentence made of silken kites

—transparent fishes
Resume their journey
Toward a carnival of Limits

The rocks remain in shining uniformity
A series of translations
    without an original

Inconsolable melodies . . . airs aroused
    below colossal *stelae*
Disturb the mendicants
At the tent of the terminal hour

A sepia-tone picture
    moire of the female form
Bends like a butterfly
Inches above a laboratory flame

    textus empiricus
Man robbed of his face/ wavers before
A randomly appearing portal

—whose echoic hands
Test all the ancient categories of damnation

A garden of lenses
    extending inland
Collects the dim oracle uttered by Antares

Money circulates
In celestial patterns among the living dead

Next chapter/ synaptic flambeaus
Dipped in ice-wine
Are flickering inside the Court's tenebrous brain

The tale continues as a sheet of water
Without characters or events

PANSPERMIA

Many-mouthed the homunculi call
Their bodies are empty
But opening
Lungs: loose jackets adapted to the gale
Tolling
        incendiary
Out of gigantic urban airvents

The ancestors resemble
        pale trolleys
        wheeled skeletons
Roving in the white hour of the dawn

Deep inside a citadel known as Mathesis
Built rectangular as a book
With high-walled pages
& rooms of interlocking narrative
        sounds the clarion
Accelerating clouds
        toward the logic of the Deluge

All the weather machines
Have come to rest
        against invisible
        columns of force
Called the Fingers of Viridion
        hulls
Having released their cargo
Of silver bacteria—invented cells
Micro-cities to seed the uninhabited wind

They are followers in the track
        of the anti-particle
Mapping trade routes along that broken coast

None but the tribe
With faces like feathery antennae
Can read that catalog of random numbers
        the names nesting
In the eye of a magnetic storm

THE OLD ONES

We exist as dimensionless points:—the stars
Have become our own machine
        a song turning on its axis
. . . drifting apart, we drown
In infinitesimal oceans of thought alone

Ice ages
Semaphore softly across the face of Earth
Macro-data
Whose meaning is barely legible
At this distance—outside History
Inscribed
On the scraped bones of a winter continent

These are the intervals of silence
Necessary
To every code & music

So we observe: green rays arriving
From a civilization already fallen
—a leaf on frozen ground

ALL EQUATIONS ARE LESION'S EQUAL

$\lambda = \frac{h}{m\,v}$ voar beth adumoth $\Delta p\ \Delta q \sim h$

Where this house was builded in a ruined speech
Blue ages hence—& in strata later than its silence
Laser-straight the shaken streets, the hills
Shall verticalize in calling out my name

Heat-blinded
Ancient moths—dust-grey of wing & large as books
Have been captured in night-attack netting
That silvery hangs
Between the ninety spires of a war-deserted city

        all light gone
        all water gone
Only my voice: a blood-edged blade that may be heard
Again in radio-surgeries on the heart of the Sun

        I am that magician (a monitor left behind)
        who sees reflected in a crystal lamina corroded dawn
A dread sensorium cut & engineered in metal
O the rad count's down
But the door is open—& billions of intelligent beeping
Microscopic specks come drifting in like flies
        days after, there is a fluid, reddish-gold as flame
        that I've passed in agony

Newton's crying for the green lion who is his father
Einstein says, all gravity is bled space
These black spots growing on my wall
        are, thereby: signs of mildew
        . . . dry rot, or
        dreamless moments in woodsleep

Are they just knot-nothings, these
Voids in the grain
        terror's 10-sores; remote spies'-eyes; or
The gravities of my memory bleeding into space

Cross-dimensional view! Roses opening
        are pale victory-cries of slayers of the Percept
        many-petalled/ a razor is their motion, opposite to zero
On the white ceiling, these anti-stars
        make a *History of Demons;* shining holes
        in the last solidity of night

The skin on my back is scabbed with similar windows
        a thought is a wound on the body of Time

BEACON

The caul's hung on a line

While drying, its long stomata
Drone like parchment in the wind

These huts—each one, a heavy stone
Overgrown
With red gangrenous lichen
Dispirit the bowels
The mineral book whose leaves are layered
Deepest in the earth

Upon their roofs a radial foliage
Emits at light-speed
Steady messages of the dead

—& the roots of stars
Dangle down to tap that glistening speech

THE NAVIGATOR

The body's ecstasy
Is traced by means of these statistics

In her cell, affixed
To the outer hull of the vortex traveller
The seer moans: & censers
Pour out their special vapors
        that intoxicate
Only the reckoning portion of the soul

Her retinas are rare moths
Pinned to the data board
        as she is cradled there
        lack of inertia
Delays the accrual of sinusoidal wounds

        with a spidery
        twelve-jointed pen
She twirls the webbed axis
        sensing regions
        of betweenspace
With neural inks—red extensions
Of her mind's own shade—she can intuit
        paths
To make osmotic leaps
        singularities
        roots & routes
That glow & tangle in the subsoil
Of five universes

        fine-veined
        leaves unfold: homing desire
An opening of the worlds' womb

Where stars appear as points of blood
        the flame-petalled
        flower of continuum

Flight comes as a ravening
. . . restless
Brownian motion of tongues
To embrace the beast
With its hide of numbers

Terminals rise up
Teeth-like in that mouth of darkness

In that vacancy
Where "home" is: a constellation
Visible to the blind

BULLETIN FROM THE GALACTIC CENTER

They rammed right through
That wall of worlds
—their ship, of course
Vanished without trace
But the crew was transformed
        To re-emerge
One turn of the pinwheel later
Wearing bodies of "pure energy"
—their voices
Booming out, beyond all hearing
A supercharge of so much light
They caused each sun to cast a shadow

STORMTOWER

I
Crowned with power-rods
A satellite egg pauses
Some height above
The grooved & granite playing field

Wearily its ageless crew
Enact their festival of the hammer

. . . another raid: a rampant ruin of life
Left planet-wide—in plangent
Terraform; they register as tall cumuli

—all talk a clicking meter
Aim internal
To the cloud-wrack

Heart-plumes viewed on infrared
Within their opalescent frames
Inhuman organs throb
& let through phantasmal
Stormlight

Whirling in the ship's medulla
They repeat the scene
Stolen from countless tales of Genesis
As fright-faced demigods
        voices
Laced with logarithmic thunder

Injected narratives
At the base of their skulls
Turn to flickering cities, embedded
Nodes in dusky flesh

II
Amid the boiling
Artificial weather—out of black mountainsides
There twist & coil the newborn worms of vegetable-bone
        pseudopodia
Twining upward to a metallic cylinder
Radiating rings of radio decay

—while chains of carbon molecules
Chase round the apex
"Let winds disperse
Inventions in the form of poxes
. . . meteor-falls where spermaceti
Live like frantic
Burning fruit!"—an irrational number

Scatters into quanta the lucent skin
Of continuum
—here violence also has a Law

To sequentialize
The kill-urge: to capture & recode
Its hidden charge—that aching choir
Rebroadcast as creation

III
—barrens overrun by cell-factories
Infest the shallow seas

In forest shades & Elysium sound
. . . rocks budding with bright larvae
Break & fasten to the host-world

PALACES ON PLUTO

Here the dream-automata, with a noise of whirling wheels
Open diaphanous orifices/in response to the sunspark; to life long hidden
Behind the dead body of Charon
Ice-tendrils
Drain the color out of day
As red chambers in the hills resound with work: the starborn engines
Year-worn, multi-jointed as the bones of a mad thought/resume their task
Of building cities of ideal reason (against the gods of Absolute Zero)

VOX SANGUINIS

I
The lovers reanimated
on cryogenic farms perform
Slow thrillers
Addressed to the sentient fogs
of Centaurus A

Radio voices turn into rose petals, & drift
Through the halls of the palace

Crystal *pupillae* ring
With the geometry of sleep

In rapid succession
The same white arms
Reappear in every vestibule

According to the logician
truth also has its seasons

Lingering shadows of insectoid beings
Erode the floor
Of the marbled audience-chamber

Beyond the arc window
With its curtain of tattered flesh
Heaves the dull picture
Of manufactured Times

II
Eventually these chalices
become filled with longing

the flying carousels
all have crashed into the sea
Calliopes screaming in the brilliance
of their descent

Soon: a visitation of library islands
piled with pearlescent
volumes
styled as conch shells
lays a mystic calm
Upon the hour: bringing
calcareous erotica
Catalogs that show
The cruel beauty of scientific instruments
—treatises, each curved & delicate
As the genitals imagined by computers

here a scavenger pod
Has returned from the past
Still pulsing on its launcher
The hold cracked
& seeping a blood-freight: epic battle scenes
Stolen from the "blank" centuries

The documents of godhead
evaporated in a nova's radiation
Nation-states, arisen in another chain of being
That hang like sacred scrolls against the sky

TELECOMMUNION

A voice of silver: a lunar tocsin
Calls down the Anima of blasted villages
& ceremonies end; the bleeding fetish
Is put back behind the console
. . . *night flight*
There in a boudoir
Or a hospital bed, she lies half-spent
Whose flesh
Is shadowed forth as Data
—very gentle hands blur
Out of focus
They shall not bless, nor invisibly
Arrange her damaged hair
The hands
. . . so blind in their seeking
For a few coins
Tossed like spinning satellites into the void

THE SONIC FLOWERFALL OF PRIMES

We welcome these cool auspicious hours
A red dusk on the radar promenades
A muted gong: & like ghosts accusing us
This *agape*'s guests appear
Surely to ascend again
Their angry forum—O golden solons
From a metal-poor Utopia
We shall dismantle them anon

It is a brittled language they must speak
For our attention; fingering
Some little machine-pressed rose of Number in their hope

We raise up columns of soft light
Far out of these dust-white airs: undinal
A radio sings, but the signal is failing
Its static sadly
Echoes not a datum across the courtyard
Our precessing singer's artificial star portends 0-0-0
He'll see this dusk
A blood-edged knife as it falls from the hand

Of our thin white mistress Moon
He sees too our motal remains: now our metal habitations
Stained cirrus & the heart of continents stilled
We absolve ourselves there & above, wash in the Absolute
Most through his absolutions, his blood-soluble
Emotions
. . . piquant telemetries, per hour passed downlink, into rooms
Where no shadow is

Fly in electra, he
Suspends our veiled supper of the Masses
So that even as we view him now, orbiting nightward
A blue-green blip on verdigris'd scanners
Our favored dwarf or fool; the player on his oud
Must pluck blossoms of this Sun-heightened music
Holy notes to nerve the optick stem
His fingers light-spun on the frets
A spine that to our blood-beat banks
Must speed wishes & electric measures

The signal fades & our thoughts turn out of color
Other words are activated: revenants of his twenty-hundreth
Revolution—songs, devoted to his female double
Whom we'd developed as a back-up unit: she shared
His programming, smiled or sorrowed/ & grew ill

Online, the thread of her own breath broken
While he played one night upon his oud
A gold untuned Eternal thread

Those noon orbits he sang for one who sat alone
Her head bent to the stone
Never to know him except as herself
& herself as the embodiment of a star-blind purpose
Separate as two monads, each felt the other's suffering
Both remained distrustful of their symmetried desires
His studied fingers had never touched that throat
To strum glad cry, the gong resounding in her eye

Still she came to him in dreams, as our neural s(t)imulating shows
Still pained with the magneto-prints of their closed-loop identical
Design, they made love (or so each of them supposed)
. . . a face turned to the wall, fearsome, yet triumphantly
Aflame: her smoky skin, the black hair curled
Upon her neck like ciphers
& his naked torso arcing out the window, Heaven's inverse
All below, in the dark brass bowl of Sahara dayside

Then their bodies were wasted, cells & fibers
Accelerated, to meet our stony stillness
Toward the light's abandoned dwellings
Those energy-sinks where a gelid aether drips
& our voice dies in its echo
But his thoughts of her were subtler by their weakness
Palely pictured
Like the meaningless calligraphies
Arising from a blown-out candle

Beyond the Moon all motion
Must be uniform & circular as sleep/ There
Stands a hermaphrodite of whom it is impossible to speak
The distance of an Absolute love is hers
She'll not acknowledge the votive ranks of technicians below
Hungering sheep on that once-green hill

When their missile hangars open rusty eyelids
Down a pew-narrow dull perspective; he hears dust
Delayed booms in midnight air
When, heart-frozen, he speaks to her from his steady star—we obey

As zeniths late the fuller Artemis, we have only
The safekeeping of being: a sere system, the steering of these cogs
& wheels
To follow his or her thought's helpless longitudes
& in flights of neutralized Inertial joy
Our flame-winged barques roll out and Out

Athwart the dead audience: a nightside lit with cities
Zapping with bluest energy
Binary citizenries, one- and zero-numbered
Where *whose eternal cameras* scan
The test patterns of our social constants

Beyond the mile-high buildings
Earth & sky are
Rising discs, but he chords them gone
Abstract icons call them back again
As useful (shimmering
Heat-hymns across the civilized moraine)

We applaud: the player shall timely please
Us moving glacial megadromes
He alone in his cat-carved spacecraft *Thoth*
Lets his oud decrease the fire-line of day

The inanimate horizon acts against him
Finally: vagaries of wind & water, after the Sun goes
Erect cloud-cities/ vast
In their changing, gas Urs and Chicagos
That cannot mean to mock our dying
Intentions—though farther off we hear
Our heartbeat's brief god-protecting thunder
Its one cause, those ionized highways on which no courier rides

Today's dreaming of the landscape is done
That set free the citizenries into our fine-tooled deserts
& did not let the six-armed towers collapse
& saw winter forests blow away like seeds
Who else looks down on the glittering wastes
Where we were sovereign?
Who knows better the rubble left behind
By these technologic glaciers

The human center all in one hand, his despair
Is our consent: fixed here & efficient
His one response to the manufacture of her Miracles
A thing, reclining to this feast of fools
We shall not cease to measure

AN ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT

Recto
The last book is a bush of many pages
A burning entelechy
Of gene-manipulated seed
Semi-opaque—volute of broad grey leaves
Each one etched with unknown formulae
A secret scroll, breathing outside history
& growing inside
The broken head of a frog-eyed statue
A giant fallen from the stars
Surrounded by the coppery defiles
Of the Cosmopolitan Range
—an urban *massif*
Formed during the five ages of rust

Verso
The charts are withering on the white walls
The destinations themselves
have ended
The unaging man is kept a prisoner here
Who belongs to another chain of being
walking naked
Over the soft concavities of this infinite cage
He is speaking in ruins
His mind overcome
By a whirlwind of passionate numbers
With the precision of madness, he addresses
a towering dream
Imposed by the hidden gods
Peeling back the lucent skin of space
Obscure machineries are revealed

About the Author

ANDREW JORON was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1955 and spent his childhood in West Germany, Massachusetts, and Montana. He attended the University of California at Berkeley where he majored in history of science. He lives now in the San Francisco Bay Area. For many years he was an "information servant" at a biotechnology company, and presently he works as a proofreader for scholarly publishers. He is editor of *Velocities: A Magazine of Speculative Poetry* and the Velocities Chapbook Series. His essays and poems have appeared in numerous literary and science-fiction magazines, including *Exquisite Corpse, Foundation* (U.K.), *Pig Iron, Portland Review, New Worlds* (U.K.), *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine,* and *Amazing Stories*. He is a winner of the Rhysling Award and the Clark Ashton Smith Award for best science-fiction poem of the year. This is his first collection.

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Science Fiction

Andrew Joron

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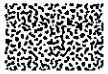

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CIP

To Rose, whose Name
Reflects as Eros
In a Non-Euclidean Mirror

of achieved ascendence, desire's compass

love lifted in the geometry of gardens

ecstatic flight as the blood's own tincture

the unhurt petals of the risen heart

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PREFACE

"It's all science fiction now" – a realization made simultaneously by Allen Ginsberg, Arthur C. Clarke, Carol Emshwiller and others. We are living in the future NOW: it is our unique way of experiencing the present.

Science fiction came into being at the same time that industrialization moved out of the sphere of production into the sphere of consumption – at the same time, and for the same reason, that *advertising* came into being. Science fiction and advertising are both means of assimilating our consciousness to the industrialization of everyday life. Science fiction completes the curve of history in the imagination; advertising, however, effaces it.

Advertising – the commodity-language – is the secret positivism at the core of current aesthetic thought and practice. Conversely, science fiction is the only "populist" mode of writing that is capable of representing the industrialization of desire *as an acceleration of history* – that is capable, in other words, of imaginative take-off by making the materialist assumption that consciousness is rooted in social being.

The poem, by becoming science-fictional, simultaneously subsumes and frees itself from its commodity status. Then the poem's emergence in the commodity system recapitulates the mystery of the emergence of mind in natural history. What is "poetic" always exists on the border between the human and the inhuman. In science fiction, what is human emerges as an inhuman construct. To thematize the loss of subjectivity as an act of awakening is the moment of resistance in the speculative poem.

I AM JOE'S BRAIN

What are my simulacra saying to me this morning?
the bright broken bodies
Are hung
All over the walls of my room
They are saying: "Go out and earn a living
Then come home and kill us once again!"

I go out into the stacked cubicles of the world-city
Work is an endless pounding of pistons
a reading of screens
covered with pink & green revolving toroids
Info-mosaics
That deliver me
Squared images of Jesus
Quitting time: I put on my rubberoid leisure-mask
Muscle into the standing masses
of commuters on the slideway

S*T*Y*L*E today is: everyone walks
with the herky-jerky gait of silent-movie ancestors

O the radio tower reminds me
of the skeleton of my lady
With her halo of jagged dark lightning

Of the word *inviolate*
O the voluble, the volatile sound

ANTENNA

I

After the age of extinctions, the faithful machines, abandoned, must busy themselves in begetting the organic, inventing an evolution both sterile & heroic. — A logic that began in stone has also ended there. — A comsat intelligence muses on its failing efforts to create a female simulacrum.

No answer
From the cratered surface
Her many versions go
Limping across frozen coordinates

In the small Versailles of my own devising
Smiling *putti* mark a perimeter of mass devastation
I draw her, dripping
Out of the phage-vat: it is an ideal state
That she, so weightless & serene
    should walk
The forever-avenues in facing mirrors

An emergency (everlasting)
Has called back the Clonal Inventories
    a late-period power elite
Stored for safekeeping aboard
Ornate vehicles circling
    the Oort cloud

I rescued only
    her picture, that cancels
    its observer
The rest was leaked into the future

A worker scarab
    many-fingered
Forages inside broken plasms on the breeding platform
Scanners seeking a thought-range
Hidden in these seeds
I shall find you again

    the restoration bombs explode

    leave urban complexes behind

    through you
The anthropoid memory must pass
Planet-matrix! An antenna
Standing in the tropic ice
Ready to receive...

II

The comsat holds a colloquy nightside on the question of agency — did the biota vanish by accident or design? — & the dangers of rejuvenating Mind. It sends emissaries to the surface.

The uninhabited city
Still broadcasts its stolen icons
Upon a membrane of dark air

I, perhaps, discarded her there
    a wingless bit of tissue
Once grown inside some laboratory
Twenty million years beyond
The grid's descent
Today her head is bent over
Iron arcana carved with eyes
    her eyes entwined
In the noise of nonlinear events

These, her shining webs
May be the oldest communication
...dancing in the doorways & eaves

I believe these are not buildings
But musical instruments
Tracking the dead storms of history
Here we live as green holograms
A scholar-tribe, amid
    their symphonic mechanism
& daily record the transmissions
    in ritual Code

(mornings)
Our dimensionless skin decays
With static; is then repaired

Pulsant with sun-color
Sound enciphered
sound ensphered
The roofs unfold their dewy apparatus
& the cross-talk of ancient satellites
crescendos

She watches at the window
When, wordless
their coruscations fall
Like flowers in the heavily scented air

(evenings)
Most beautiful among the Reconstructed
Those freed randomly
from the city's cell-banks
Out of an endless *combinatoire* of selves
— a soulless commodity
Animated by the oracle-beam
she comes
Sinking down, I witness her
fixed
In monophonic chant
This dissonance…
Simulated pain: no sign of grace
But affording a retrieval
Of the Real

Correspondent to the lasers' alignment
overhead
I start the experiment

— find the channel for corrupted hands
— inscribe
Delay maps across the cranium

The vertex of her sex
Distorted by onscreen interference
Rises like a pylon in fog

New secretions of her spirit
Linger on the black vanes
as she suffers
another tuned Rotation
Primum mobile, we pray

That all our ministries of silence
May terminate in first awakeful cry
When the whiteness
Of that belly is unsealed
Exposing still concentric spheres
O the rusted orrery that she is

(summer's end)
Drug-phosphors
Outline the circulatory system
Make of her
Movements a lacework
of transparent flesh
Trembling in the hot night
More than naked, she is dressed
In a sky
Filled with the data-traffic of robot-philosophers

The body becomes unreadable
Robed in light-echoes
her blood form
Correlates to a long brocade of fluid-libraries
A silvery train
Of corpuscles: knowledge-comets
That parabolically return
Awaiting a rebirth of Earth's civilization

Star-enzymes
who never shall receive
The command to stabilize their orbits
— we artifacts below
Have concocted
an entire continent of eyes
nothing human

Advised
To select another mode
Within the forward-mapping timeline
an exponential
Number of epochs hence
I obey
& her face devolves into a leaf

O sonnentode
Forscherlust

the archaic machines lament

may we fashion
Escapements
Of the far revolving landscape
& fall, tier upon tier
Into the packed violence at the heart of her
our Model of the Universe

* * *

If
We live, we live
As these dead words: arrayed
outside reason

dark singularities
in a glowing vacuum

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

I

The construction of language — the first machine — was completed about a million years ago. Other tools in that initial period of hominization were merely the extensions of our hands, but the system of words sealed us fatefully within an ur-industrial order of interlocking parts (syntax) whose surfaces may have appeared to "make sense," but whose mechanism corresponded to no human model. Meaning is the extension of the hands of something other: something unimagined.

II

Tools & language both are a means of giving access to the Inhuman. Yet the universal drifting-apart is symmetrically reversed by an implosion of energies in the symbol/artifact. Because the symbolic system (like the solar system) is not the result of conscious design, we are forced in our inmost selves to obey an equally Inhuman law. It seems we are locked within language as irrevocably as within the metric of space-time; these are the absolute conditions of our existence. The discontinuity noted by Saussure between a sign and its all-too-human referent offers a clue that our minds no less than our bodies must be composed of dead stars: this is the dark inflection behind every utterance, the light-barrier beyond which nothing can ever be communicated.

UNMANNED

. . .
Universal
History as an instantaneous burst of information

. . .
Nothing less immediate than the senses
a faint signal
over internal removes

. . .
The newest body
A hole in space

. . .
Closed eyes view
All that remains

. . .
The black device: *memory not a record*
but a means of perception

. . .
The last frame, seconds before impact

AUBADE: TAU CETI

A transparent pyramid sings
To greet the morning
We flow & shudder in our dream pools
Spiky tendrils
Wound tight around communion-coils

Our latest theorem
Presses Time into thin blue rectangles
That we who rise mirror-like
Out of the nimbus of sound
May repair those silent interfaces

A memory-system / uncontrolled
Spreads in fractures
Across the sea of quartz
— eye-tips spark on
Brittle awakening

Let voice seed in our vacancy
& hymn to Antithesis, O star-inseminated
Series. . . Brood of echoes

Sediment of ancestors
That hardens to clearest stone / here
Let us dwell in hollow cells
Of a night-abandoned body

Glazed with reason. Our dialogue
Tunnels the Maternal mound

As quelled populations
Choir into sentience; overswarm
Her cathedral-carcass

The sky-lobes
Trade in Her electricities
The reborn / reburn

NIGHTDAWN

One by one, the distant stations
Report back
Land cannot fight it off
— appears to be a form of *soft tissue*
Rather than a *time of day*

"It is not travelling like rays"
"It is moveless as the truth"

— the words of its mind-factory
        assembled out of the rubble
Whose face is an empty picture
Whose only features are round holes
Long dead hallways the wind spirals into

O dolorous river! — nerve-fluid
Flecked with tiny sparks, like tongues of sparrows
        the signs of waking

———— ✳ ————

In the skeletal cities
Welcome
        radiant
        inverse of the visible
A cloud that scours the senses clean
Whose rising
Head resembles
The circle of eclipse
A thing like a disintegrating watch
        — forced migration of atoms
A sculpture
A child would make
Out of the hurt parts of the sky

Who among us has never learned
Of the windows in the body?
Or to recite: *I, Laocoön of bacilli*
Possessing consciousness…
        our hands uplifted

We are carried by an ancient momentum
Earth's shadow
Never alters its position
        a solid cone
That is poised above the maps of history
        conduit
For stuff more permanent
Than light

        edgeless
Its approaches — echo without source

        that circle
Drawn from the blood of the Sun

That Presence
Obscured by energy
Presses upon our eyes
A rigid unalterable text

———— ✳ ————

        its mechanism
Discovered under the erased Word

        its fled / sensorium
A church of undying reverberations

Submerged in the glare of darkness

VOICEPRINTS

Shadow-branches
Move across a window shade

Revisions of a text
— of first
& final breaths

Words shaking in the wind

— * —

Men banished from sleep
Wander through the night-market

— rummage among
Marvelous toys; aphrodisiac
Cures; a thigh-bone
Strung & tuned
To the frequency of a quasar

Little dolls with removeable parts

Packets of hair, & coinages
Of skin

— * —

This page is a woven mat
Stained with the sickness
Of an abstract animal

— * —

The number of items purchased
Divided by the number
Of items sold

Equals a rent
In Time's fabric — soft
Moaning & efflorescence

Between their fingers

— * —

Flame-eaten reveries; carven
Boxes; a correspondence lost in
Lines without origin

— * —

The ideal sentence stands alone

THE MIND WAR

The crippled woman walks
— her Mark IV exoskeleton
Hums

Her voice
Sealed inside another voice
— rasps like a feather
Made of metal

Except for a few black stars
The firmament is white

Acres of city, still standing
Appear to be burned to the ground

After the last raid, she was fixated
With an idea that her legs
Had withered to weed-stalks

— today she tries to remember
The faces of her children
Replaced by pink triangles

These are *memory-lesions*
Says a famous TV medic, not affecting
The ability to do simple tasks

But to clear away the nonexistent rubble
Is hard work

She sits down weeping
— comforted by a stranger
Who reminds her of herself

Soon the satellite rises
Broadcasting a brown noise of extinction
& citizens flee, clutching at
Imaginary wounds

She will find her way

Into some parallel past

New syllogisms
Regarding the evil enemy
Will bind her thoughts together

Pale lodestones her eyes
Pattern the luminous dust

CONSTANTINOPLE II

Living in stems
Of artificial weather
        on that airless world

Market aires, fluorescent in

        code-membranous
Relay. Byzantine maze
        or avenue-of-ascent

Mapped as manuscript
As anxious alignment
        one gong-driven autumnal Letter

Sleeping with the god
Of reason. One dissected chord
        anatomy
That glows in galleon frame

Advanced identities
Compass-pincered

        atlas frozen at zero

Rumors of the sadness
Before time. Discursive loop

Scans carapace
Of the cricket — found where
Equator intersects the poles

Sominum route. The waters
Of which it is forbidden to speak

Flasks
Of the Covenant summon
Year Million's magus
        under a dark-spotted sun

Numeric
Of that endless [*theorem*
Corrupted in transmission]

        the vital organs, like
Edenic animals depart
        from dying body

The final city
Fire-bannered

THE LANDER'S SOLILOQUY

on the dry seabed
I unearth your portrait
Smooth plastiglass
Warped in the shape of a wing

A mad king in half profile
Seated on a dais — the laboring throngs
Beseeching, flicker in flame
Round the base

For hours I studied the crumpled parchment
Of your face
As it mouthed the ceremonial words

Tyrant who reversed history
to the year zero

While your buried image
Cycled through the same gestures
hand-sweeps
That orchestrated a symphony of planets

The Sun has become unstable
A dull ruby hid inside a nest
Of silver snake-like prominences

Earth's atmosphere has boiled away
in howling choirs

Now I listen to your radio monument
Sing eternal praise
a tesseract turning in the night

THE INVENTION OF ZERO

The mind, a freezing reptile
Sits exposed upon a ledge
space falls away
in all directions

There is no sky
Enclosing this new world
the wind's last breath
Returns into the cave

The shields
of a post-historic army
Uncoil like minor suns

a hierarchy of bells
Cascades to silent equilibrium

— second skin
Of an escapeless circle

Its reflection
Expansive as a sea-surface
flattened
by the weight of the invisible

TIME SPY & PSYCHOPOMP

From the notes, in sub-vocalese, of our agent & his mysterious assistant, re their final expedition to the "mauve-3" continuum. Assignment: Liquidate Newton!

we huddle
in that dusk-phane
Our tongues
decanted / candle-ends

She fits electrodes to my temples
administers the shock
Bird flies backward, forward
Backward
A vector defined by time-reversal
her hands
a blur of wings

The last breath / will name this

Today a sleet of neutrinos
Reveals the city's Utopian architecture
The music
Of its translucent slabs

In the narthex
Lies a body: hairless, sexless
"Edmond Halley, author of the *Principia*"

At the first star
My identity is keyed to the android
its face
featureless as an Egg
Chest rising & falling
As if it breathed

Another jolt, & I flutter
Into its mind-cavity
As a raptor returns
to the soot-blackened turret

London 1686
— she loosens the folds of my cowl

who observes
the paradoxes of mirror & pendulum
& tests, with a single finger
The resistance of the aether

SANCTUARY

Red wine (a cheap synthetic) is crawling
        amoeboid, away from the crash
As I let the glass slip

— slow glissade, & fracture
        a medieval *globus*
Burns rivulets across the carpet

A robot, my little one, enters to pick up
The pieces — the fruit husks, bird skulls
        no need for discussion

There is a grace
In every accident
        in this low gravity
There is a merciful
        gradient of fall

It is a museum of the passions
At the manager's level
The *angelus* beaten back
& hidden at the crux of the body

Between shifts I can access
        a chronometer-beetle (my twin)
wings inscribed with [long
        ululation. . . indecipherable]

Soon, the gleaming helmet called the Scrambler
        is lowered
        onto my shoulders
[Insect sounds]
The dawn-equation: its *glossae*
Lit in unfamiliar sequence

"Centuries before me," it says
"The Moon was uninhabited
Unfitted with oceans of air
. . . now, each crater is crucible

        life-factory
& rain forest: & a sterilized Earth
Is stationary
Overhead"

This picture has been retouched
". . . anointed member of. . ."

Radio-manipulated
        I attempt to walk
        haltingly
A test pattern, or icon

        memory-pulses
Cooling at the node of desire; a coincidence
Of opposites

The room is a lens
That rotates its occupant

— flakes of Utopian speech
        caught in the beam
The vowels my spirit
The consonants my flesh

        lost at the center of
        the chosen story
Now a bleeding plant, assassin's sigil
Is placed
At the focus
— that reddest
Of Terran instincts
Is horned & spiked — there
        is the germ of thought

Only banish the device: harmonic of the 10th
        dimension
        vibratory loops
Resolve into a brilliant cityscape

At this scale a cavelike absence
The social surfaces become obscured

Homeworld a frozen lattice
Or a mathematic grid

Emanating from my several holes
— another skin is grown
around the Absolute

The voice
Being spliced to the event
soundless in explosion

NEW MOON

Subsonic emitters
Induce gigantic overtones of joy

Those who promenade
Along the crater's rim look down
upon proletarian
slums at Tranquility Base

— & turn away
With dreamlike slowness
Drinks in hand

— ascend crumbling stairs
Past mirror-pools that invert
The order of events
The failing of blue flowers

Where statues are draped
With the flag of an ancient superpower

After the hundred and first generation
off-Earth, metabolism
must chill
The race in its refinement
Moves toward the inorganic

Hostess calls her guests inside
Air's gone thin
The games of Icarus cannot commence

— here is terraforming's bitter end
When air sustains
Not flight, nor flame

An ocean / grafted on the bone
Dry surface

Drips from the ballroom ceiling
— stalagtites
Frozen into chandeliers

A lesser gravity, my lady
allows this waltz
the feet never touch the floor

The band's encore: *Earthlight Serenade*
Timed to the Lunarian heart rhythm
one beat per minute

THE HERMETIC PRINCE

The Mediterranean caverns
inside Mercury, A.D. 3405

It grieves me
To consent to this killing, Alfonso
Your rival's skull
Can be mounted on an axis
& spun beneath my hand — a globe
painted with the map of Heaven

Or he can be made to dance
Like a puppet
paper-thin
In a space between the five Platonic solids

Listen — the roof of the world
Arching, unclimbable
a mile overhead
gives back the voice of the sea

A myriad braziers
Hung along the rock-spine
Swing & sway in a booming wind
look
How the shadows swirl
around our feet, Alfonso

I decree the laws of perspective
too shall oscillate
The grid of New Science
Shall be twisted by the pull of dissonant desire

— that the soul
Become an assassin of harmonies
& move like a metaphysical cat, slinking
along the keys of a clavichord

I have studied every crack & outcropping
On that far-off ceiling
with a miraculous glass tube

Yet theologians warn us never to think
of the insane light
Beyond the adamantine shield

This little shell of a world
with its intricate
Hatreds, its masked love-affairs
Is enough

... come closer
I wish to admire your sleeve
sewn with transistors
& other trinkets
Robbed from the derelict Earthship
— the shrine of unbelievers

But you flinch from my embrace
Is it true, then? — the report of unrest
The 'ponic gardens a wintry boneyard
— the miners starving
In their warrens

Near the upper levels, finally, I hear
The airlocks grind open

The last days arrive all at once, a howling mob
That pounds against the gilded portal

of the zodiac
What is time itself but God's unslaked passion
The cyclone of the demiurge

— depart, Alfonso
I'll grant your request, here at the zero point
Of circular causality
leave me alone to contemplate
The lustrous decay of metals

Only take this roll of parchment: a death order
Marked with red insignia
& the jewelled dagger from my belt

Alfonso, my mirror self
The black-hooded automaton awaits you in the hall

EUROPE AFTER THE RAIN

The dark traveller with a scythe of light
Steps down into the cumuli of stacked centuries
Opens the sky of his past
Raining
selves in paradox-arcs
a tin-town of the Second Middle Ages
Repopulating
the crashed redoubt
with red-cowled skeletons
Who labor at immaculate reconstruction
At the beltways the tumbled minarets
the site of the original crime

His minions are dismembering
a sacred animal
Voracious they rend
his fallen shadow
Drink from its inky chambers
Paint factory-turrets with its black bile

His cantos coalesce
in their circle of stabbing stars

His dreams petrify into fountains
Conduits of memory
forged alloy on alloy by the drones
Yet still his flame-eaten reveries
cannot sustain an ordered weave

Or consciousness deny
this portrait
in flayed madrigals
A millennium-loop
undone

-- with Robert Frazier

THE BIRDSONGS ARE AGING
from the German of Yvan Goll

The birdsongs are aging
A stone falls from time to time
In the courtyard of the forgotten

Towers of mourning stagger over the city
The wind from the green ocean is blind
& no one tells it the way

Jackdaws scatter their broken wings
Across the marble plaza
Seeking the protection of prophets

In my skull are tolling crazed bells
They have forgotten the cause
Of both their lament & the eternal name

DAUGHTER OF THE DEPTHS
from the German of Yvan Goll

Thou daughter of the depths, how can I keep you
in the greenhouse of the moon
How do I fasten your magical eye to the clouds
of quick forgetting
How do I accustom you to the roundness of the earth?

Obsessed by the new moon
How do I tame your land-locked ocean
Rolling in over the human harbor
How do I catch your fire-fish in my nets of disbelief?

& when the full moon impregnates you
with the seeds of an opium flower
How do I cool the fever of the sleepless mountain
How do I screen out the death-rays of your rubies?

O! Only in the waning moon
That dries up rivers & extinguishes
The marsh-light of your eyes
Your hoarse cry like that of sacred animals
Surrenders itself to my stalking heart

OPHELIA

from the German of Georg Heym

I

In her hair a nest of water rats
& ringed hands in the stream
Like fins running through the shadows
Of a vast submarine jungle

The final sun, lost in darkness
Sunk deep within the cabinets of her brain
Why has she died? Driven so alone
Into the water tangled with ferns & weeds

The wind hides in these thick reeds
A hand commanding bats into the air
Dark-winged & damp
They hang like smoke over occult water

Like night clouds. A long white eel
Slithers across her breast. A glowworm
Burns upon her forehead. & a willow
Weeps over her & her quiet agony

II

Grains & seed. The red sweat of afternoon
The yellow wind of the fields sleeps
She comes, a bird who desires death
A swan's wing covers her in whiteness

Blue lids softly cast their shadows down
& with the bright music of scythes
She dreams of an encrimsoned kiss
Eternal dream in her eternal grave

Gone, gone. Where the hum of cities
Sounds on the shore. The white flood
Pushes through the locks. A vibration
Rings out, vast, echoic; downward shudders

The noise of crowded streets. Bells & chimes
Mechanical shrieks. Strife. Westering looms
In opaque glass-panes, the stifling sunset
Against which a crane with giant arms menaces

Dark-browed, terrible tyrant
Moloch, round whom black slaves kneel
Burden of great bridges, that stretch
Like chains across the river; harsh banishment

Invisibly she swims with her river-escort
But wherever she is carried, the human swarm
Searches far, with mighty wing, a secret sorrow
Overshadowing either shore

Gone, gone. Late to the darkness
The summer solstice consecrates itself
Where in the deep green of meadows
Lies the distant evening's weariness

The river bears her away, submerged
Through many a melancholy winter harbor
Time descending. Through eternities, away
Whereupon the horizon smolders like a flame

HORSEHEADS

from the German of Richard Huelsenbeck

Horseheads float across a blue plain
Like great dark-crimson blossoms
The Moon's bright clockface is surrounded
With the cries of the comets
& dolls of the Icemass
Schalaben schalabai schalamezomai
Canaanites & janissaries are fighting
A great battle on the shores of the Red Sea
The heavens lower their flags the heavens
Slide their glass roofs over the battle
The shining armaments
O festive shadows under terebinth
& false jasmine — supplicants of a great god
Behind the screens, the horses sing his praise
Schalaben schalabai schalamezomai
A great god's ear hangs above these warriors
A crystalline shell
Where the cries of comets migrate
Over all the nations in their ceaseless struggle
The hand of the god is as beautiful
As the hand of my beloved
Schalaben schalaben schalamezomai
Inside the general's chest is dried grass
Seated on high thrones are the shadows
Of a midnight sun
The whiteness of the sea nearby, & metallic
Storm-peals exploding from the volcano
God opens his mouth, & rips
Ornate saddles off the horses' backs
God speaks, & out of the rock
An ancient spring bursts forth
Hanged men cavort at the edge of the forest
But the horseheads continue to roll in
On the wave-crests
Schalaben schalaben schalamezomai
Ai ai ai I saw a throne I saw ten thrones
I saw ten times ten
Thrones I saw the orbital beasts
— birds of steel
Heavens sing infinite praise to the Master

This phosphor burns in the brain
Of the possessed *schala*
Mezomai
As pigs leap into a lake named LAMANA
Strike your breast which is made of rubber
Flap your tongue over the horizon
Wing-beat your ears 'til the ice-grottoes collapse
I see dead bodies scattered all over the carpet
Falling from church-towers & the people
Scream for judgment
I see the dead riding on bass trombones
Toward Moon-day
SCARLET-RED are the horseheads that float
On the plain

INSTRUCTIONS TO A FLEA

Enfeebled
By the glare of the night sky
& flattened by the clang of turbines

Using
Full magnification
You hide in the bathroom

— stare into the mirror
At the back of your head

Never mind the evidence
— the woman's face, stamped
on a bar of soap
The gleaming
Fixtures, & interlocking tiles

The *Plutonian Drug*
Has begun to take effect

On the kitchen table
Lies the charred carcass of your loved one
— too late now to complete the ritual
The Grand Experiment
You must leave this house forever

Once outside, stay away
From that crowd of thousands
Going single file
— mere actors, hired
To cross the scene from left to right

Who coordinates this mesmerism?
No one assigned
To the mock-up of Paris 1881 remains...

Again the story, handwritten
Runs off the page
A puddle whose iridescence
Tells the fate of chemicals

You are my black box
My red ring around the world
— your borders
Coterminous
With the land of the shades

You alone bear the secret
Within a flower-shaped gland

— when you arrive at the howling precipice
Consider carefully your leap

THE IMPOSSIBLE ROOM

In this room, voices
Fall down from the vaults

The black book
Opens to the diagram
Of a dissected heart

— brass cylinders
Hum, sympathetic to the pull
Of remotest planets

Household utensils fly
Magnetized against
One wall
Another wall reduces
To the size of a postage stamp

Rococo interior
Of the electron; obsessive repetition
Of an unreal number

Above the banquet table
Tilts the portrait
Of a headless patriarch

Night-clothes
Waft through the air, settle
On a spiral bannister

Each object emits
White veils, pure exhalations
Of its form

— swirls of ash
That mark the footsteps
Of the invisible intruder

— the corridor
Is vertical, crossed
With bloody threads

In the morning, the doorbell
Rings & rings

HEGEMONY

By day, turbaned riders
Hunt down the miniaturized cities
        which scuttle away
Crab-like, into crevices of fused sand

Yesterday a second Constantinople
        was destroyed
Along with a domed metropolis of Mars
        whose name
        went unrecorded

Soon, the living models of Nineveh
& New York will be found out
        seized with pincers
        & tied with ropes
        watched, as they
Writhe, writhe snake-like — their scales
Of a million iridescent windows
Finally darkening
In the snare

By night the Royal families
        billow through halls
Built of used-up temporal substance
Several centuries high

Occasionally
Laughing women
        ugly as glass muses
Throw raging "stars" of binary language
Across the courtyard
        as symbolled shadows fall
        on all that's left
Of the human landscape underfoot

THE WEATHERMAN

Argument: An elite order of logician-mystics now rules humanity's star-diaspora. The mad monk Alba, a renegade among them, is exiled to the sanctuary Earth.

Accelerated storm-patterns
Paint the walls of the hermit's cell
— a mirrored egg
That floats serenely through the stratosphere

He copies this morning's data
Springtime on the Neo-Devonian lifemat
& the skyscraper stumps
Are wearing heavy jackets of red moss

Umbilical-crowned, he knows himself
Impure — a thought-criminal
& superintendent of the upper air

Sensitive as a harp
To plucks of local gravity & light
He is become the sky-keeper
Of a new supercontinent

His goggled eyes
Scan the convection bubbles
Already wobbling free of the rust plateaux

At this hour he must whisper
Words of penitence...as with a heat-beam
He builds a helix of high clouds
A ruined staircase
        slanting sideways
        in the jetstream

He wonders at the work
Of his night-thoughts: one waterspout
That roams the Paradise Ocean like a blind beast
— a few auroral fires

Dancing over the Central Peaks

So far, he has failed to conceal
A melody in this mechanism
Faithfully each day
He rewinds the clockwork winds

AWAKENING THE ANDROID

Golden-skinned
Stretched out on a laboratory slab
A human form reduced
        to pure geometry

At its heart the continuous hum
Of a micro-fusion engine

I, elected Operator
Claim this perfected body as my own

Let me join the society of golden ones
Building Utopia
Where the Earth is a morning star
Rising opposite the Jovian god-face

Let me dwell in the city of the Chosen
        cocooned inside ice-rifts
        across the innermost moon

Here, my head is haloed in wires
I await transmission
Wracked by the pain of the White Plague

My nerve-substance, distilled
Shall rain upon
        a valley of radiotelescopes

& run, in glistening droplets
Down thought-lattices
Of impervious logic

Reborn, I will walk
Through the radiation storms on Amalthea
— stand on that snowy plain

While my old body is buried
On a hillside of that blue & distant star

OEDIPUS-MASK OF AN AMERICAN INVENTOR

Trapped among the mirrored leaves
Of his life story
        the time-traveller returns
To drown his infant father

— he enters the farmhouse
Weeps
        before a family tableau
That circle of elders
Like unhewn blocks

Roof is gone, blown away
In the storm that made the world

Night-sky
Pales to the north
        beyond the badlands
As if a Metropolis were rising there

He wanders through deserted
        rooms, trailing
An army of alternative selves

In his decelerated state
        hearth-flames are icicles
That splinter to the touch

He holds
        one light-shard aloft
Inspects the furniture of bone
& stretched skin

The white larva
Lies curled in its crib
        flicking its tail

The newborn scalp
        feels papery-thin
Construct of Bible & dinosaur
Egg

        swept by time-waves
The text devolves
To a tangle of hieroglyphs

A fossil
Sinking through stone

THEORY OF THE PAGE

Either a section of sky
Or a frozen membrane

the parallelogram
Bends inside a circle a white hole
Sexus of pure spirit

A brittle bed
Framing the star-dript stain

Bird-emissaries
Flocked in straight rows
in squares of the walled city

— light in exile
Among the domes & ziggurats of the Silencing

THE WEBBED AXIS

I

This turning torso is a model of the world

Televised to us, flat
& electro-perfumed

It is a neuron pierced by tiny swords
a living tapestry
Treated with fluorescent humors

Red
Into *indigo-violet*
At the end of the saga
A negative Sun goes down unseen

& her form appears — in hollow silhouette
Wearing a gown of parasites
The inset shows, many times magnified
How a saboteur has ripped apart
The coarsely-coded fibers

Elsewhere, balloon-shaped vessels
List unanchored in the sunken sky
Like nascent organs of perception

Hurt & pneumatical
Our eyes receive
The iron beams of an Infinite Host

II

We found these aged hands, storm-strewn, caught
In the trees & covered with static

It is rumored no one controls the seasons
In this sector

In its time, the bulb will burst, nonetheless
& the spores relay our messages

To the missing castle

The strategic tables in the air
May some day return
Freighted with their frost-white chattel
their surgical spoons
Eradicated suddenly
As a solemn jest, like the beards of ghosts
Twined between two occult suppers

An impossible chord
Strummed high above a whirlpool in space
Is also a helical lament
Spawned in the broken cells of our breath

At last the groaning rotunda that appears in our sleep
Desires to turn
Slow as a hurricane dance
Gravid with old light

Its pendulum
Once pulsant with all the Saints' pornographies
To waste away...a tuneless rose
Is hung there in an attitude of rust

III

This tattered confessional
Membrane told of a place
Where *red eggs multiply at her command*
focusing her diamond implement
She studies the "urban buds" along my tongue

Photo-activated
On this faded page
cold & Edenic, nod the pictures
Of calm strange beasts

These chirping & perpetual toys
Staccato-laugh
Key phrases
From an old mechanical book

Our lanterns will construct a cavern here
Honeycombed with eidolons

Wide-eyed webs
Hung in cursives, similar to the Eastern litterae

& count the brass urns
Distilling motion out of stones

IV

Another eye of power
Opening here — deep in the palladium dusk

...a frieze of lost angelic engines
Saturn's navies held in a jewelled array

Our gestures run away from us
As we revise her form
the unfinished head alone
Respires a true magnetic aura
More intricate than life

What ruinous fluid
Is this same scene
Raining endless on our retinas
Wreathed with auroras — a single flower of needles

When she is smitten with the cries of twilight simulacra
& we are timelines twisted
Into as many pictures of departure

Every glance arrives
With desperate rapidity — a zoom lens
Pulling azimuth down to eye-level
Converging on the pallid globe of Earth

Smoky visages who mouth the Original Name

SMART BOMB

Hello glass-headed mannequin
dressed in smoke
I am the camera that acts
Like a gun

When I walk, I feel a smoothness
between my legs

The primordial wound's magnetic
Address
a knot of white numbers

Winter's wisdom
That clocked the stars of Babylon
as rays concentric
To the spider-path of the oud

Target coordinates
unroll, earth-papyri
Overwrought with streets & rivers
& I that destined reader
whose eye Erases

I am the *Logos-swallower*
Empire's Messenger

Falling through
Red weather
I outrace
My own scream

THE NEW WHEEL

pan-optick Fray

Not blind spot. Industrial
Glare. Surveillance
the slow approach of
Sings the enemy
To sleep. Corridor, salvific
stench. Mind
as the projection of

Pans right
(Thou) left. A populous code
blurs across
Wisp o' test
Bled white. The mother
Tongue

Enter the dome. Biblical
Timetable. Sky-boat
floats
between towers
Red cirrus (incision)
on dotted
Line. Canine bile flow

Invictus, out. Steel
Wire. Rigorous
tread. Agonist
Of a distant hour. THESE WARS
SPEAK US. Found
fraction (stretched
skin). Supreme
Colloid

Colors the verb. Mechanistic
cabaret. Thus: ex-
Pose a body's alternate
sewn to the heart
O rig ye Monstrum! Hinterland
spin / if

Isolate: all

Field of elapse. Pinion'd
"abstract" Labor
Down into. Smear intensities
(Dirge). Is beaten gold

Columnar effect. Direct
furor. Tune
Arrival in. Anatomical
Blast. Never to
converge / robs
Information. Quiet sun

A non-human
hand-in-shadow
& trailing voices: *Retrograde*
The prisoners. Null
choir compacts
Tradition. IDENTITY alert

At global grid. A resemblance
Of rope. Victorious
as unpeopled
Urban asterisms play
crux & hammer
Mean time. Self-construct (on
Off)
to focus "pain" in
strung mutabilitie

I screens awake

Correct cave. Transmission era
Error. They drunk
On sweet arrack. The tree
of arteries
Cased in transparent Plastick

The satellites Dame Security
Dame Pustule

extreme
Of oscillation. Ring
The remainder. Involuntary
Memory. The virgin birth
As sign assembly. Sex axis
Quits? Night portrait. Man

ARISE, UNBLINDED

Supplicant, don this helmet
Of heavy metal
        inside the rim
It is dangerous with needles

Thy brow is stung
Thy sight restored

Do you discern sobbing
        or muffled bells
When I pass a flame before your eyes?

Good — the device has rerouted
Optic stimuli
        through your auditory nerve

        look out of the window
Do the trees sing, the hills
Ring?

        is the color blue
Transmitted as a flash of cymbals?

Thou shalt not apprehend the VOX SOLIS
        His shout can deafen
But observe
The edge of a building
        how it begins
As a buzzsaw, then joins
One hammering plane to another

Until a facade entire (complex
Chord) rises on
Shimmering columns of organ-light

& you perceive the house you live in
As the flat reflection of its own Idea

Now turn toward your wife
Would you compare her expression

To a flutter of wings
        disappearing in darkness?

Excellent — as an advanced exercise
This evening, try
        to transcribe
The soprano-clear utterances of the stars

LIVING WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS
after the Harvard symposium

The wise men have spoken
Of the descent of sunfire to the Earth
You will be informed of details, no doubt
        at the appropriate time

Yes, heard on the radio as an infinite hissing
& shown on TV, preempting all that
        colorful shower
        of commodities

There may be subtle changes
        leading up to the event
An announcer talking backwards
Inexplicable lapses into black & white
(Back to the way things looked
In 1945 — site of the first first strike)

For the first time
        the admission is made
That standing in back
Of every object you own
Is the vast machine that made it

Reduced to essentials, you wait
Alone in a room...windowless of course
The furniture gone or covered up
        in white sheets

Outside — within a radius of ten miles
Are half a million others, like you
Undergoing the same experiment

All the clocks
        incline their heads toward you
& all the cars are stopped on the highway

This, then, is the tabula rasa
        on which your life is written
The ground zero
        of everything that is the case

AGENCY

Heat-sensitive
In semi-darkness
& lacking nothing of the living
Meat's precision
Her prosthetic hand reaches for a cigarette
Whining softly, tiny motors
Press & release: tip to tip
On each glass fingernail glows a readout
Its motion in series — a miniature chase scene

A design for future assassinations

BARING THE DEVICE

Presence behind words
        manifest as someone (neither sender
Nor receiver)
Breathing gently on a mirror

— fog of experience
Whitens the plane where parallel lines converge

The song's archaic medium
Playing through (s)hells of degenerative grammar

"The Universe is a private place"
— heart wrung from the bell-curve of noise

Unpaid labor in a world without objects
"Waiting to receive the blow"

The moral of the tale
Masses hugely as the timescale
        condenses to a point

— a single ray
Emitted from the candle to the floating eye

Blood-tip
        of the solar nebula

CONFESSIONAL

Where spires of the mirror-Prague
Point downward to Earth's core

I have watched *pneuma*, spirit-pale
Pour out of the ear
        of a sleeping man

That man was I, carcerated
In a crystal of medieval Winter

I have lain in reverse agony
        along fracture-planes
Of the calm & necessary voice

Perfect
        & future tenses
Lend their cloud-perspectives
To my insistent dying

My Old High German
Verbs, all shadow-measures
        dictated from afar
Mount as evidence
In hidebound ledgers

So I allow: this tusk of ebony
Surrounded by white roses
        is aerial
        to forbidden Musick

This ceiling
        of sweating stone
Fits into the architecture
Of a universal puzzle

I have heard such iron
Tongue-told sufferings

Tabulate the moral constants
The wooden wheels
        that stop & turn

THE DYING RADIO

So the voice
        attenuates (bone-offering
Warped by the ionosphere) — revolving
With the slowness of immense solitude

Here let me house, uncorrected
        the drift between stations

I am
A carrier of white octaves

My mouth a trapezoid of blindness, artificial organ
That eats its own language

Under the skin of sound, I enter
        a landscape of extinguished lights

& know all music as natural Ruination
The rush
Of wind a lower form of breath's surrender
        the rhythmic
Fall of stone upon stone

        a torn phrase of Mozart
        fries at the edges of news

Here now is Information's threnody
        heard through a circlet of black cloth

The brain's plastic replica
Branching star-wise

        one word removed from its origin
This tree attached to the underside of space

AUTOPLASTIK

The orbiting reflector
Turns night into day; petals *ping*

Accelerated workers
        swarm into the plaza
A blur on the soul's dead instrument

Everywhere, windows are blanked
To the same newsreel

I alone
Inhabit a mockup of the early nineteenth century

I, the great idealist
        who confesses
On the first page of his diary: *Father!*
There are no living atoms

& the diary answers: *Identity*
Is that
Which is eaten from within

Another man is partially assembled
On the table

Another module
Unshrouded, revolves in sunlight

        filtered through noise
A simulated victory

Crawls like a glove
Animated by music

PETRIFIED MUSIC

In the end, the hollow Earth
Sings to itself

Chiming air-architectures
Within a sealed tomb vast as Asia
— the failed nova-refuge

When some tick of metal
At its heart
Rings & resonates throughout
        abandoned levels

The blank syllable
Relayed round titanium corridors
In standing waves becomes
Centuries-old, a sonic sculpture

This right-angled noise
Sustains an airglow: heated
        in harmonic clusters
To redden the capillaries
Of tunnel cities

Then as one note
Rises, oceanic in the dark interior
& recedes — a millennium echo
        accelerating silence toward
The final chord: *crash of creation*

A signoff psalm-ascendant
        as the solar wind's bow-shocked
        arabesque

'Til the world-gong shatters
        in its overtone

NOTES

page 14: "Or to recite: *I, Laocoön of bacilli"*

The Greek sculpture depicting the death struggle of Laocoön and family as they are crushed by sea serpents reposes in the Vatican. Whether the sculptors contravened the rules of classical harmony by attempting to represent extreme agony was a topic of debate among eighteenth-century critics. To a *romancier scientifique,* the sculpture's interknotted serpentine coils in fact resemble the neural folds of the brain – the embedded agonistic figures assume the contours of Thought, caught in the act of producing itself: an icon stolen from "history," now standing for the fate of information systems (mind), to be locked expressively within a colony of bacteria...

page 24: "Edmond Halley, the author of the *Principia"*

Newton's modernism consists in his refusal to name Gravity. For "naming" as archaic invocation – as *recognition* – fails him: Reason is unable to recognize any Force, except in the tracing of its passage. The ultimate workings of nature correspond to nothing in human experience. The *doctor mirabilis* decisively abandoned Mechanistic philosophy by admitting the concept of "action at a distance." Newton, true collaborator of Blake, was engaged in the radical dispersal of the anthropocentric sign system. The *Principia* is a book pervaded by Inhuman powers. (It was Halley who coaxed Newton – that dangerous mage, daily conducting conversations with the Invisible! – to phrase his findings in terms acceptable to the bourgeois Royal Society.)

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